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NEWS RELEASE

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VA Medical Centers in Upstate New York Win Prestigious Quality Award

VA Healthcare Network Upstate New York, which comprises the Albany, Bath, Buffalo, Canandaigua and Syracuse VA Medical Centers and twenty-nine community based outpatient clinics, is the recipient of the 2008 Kenneth Kizer Quality Award. The Kizer award is the most prestigious award bestowed by the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) for outstanding patient care results based on performance measures. The award is open to each of the 21 VA Networks and is based upon the Malcolm Baldrige criteria, the world's foremost standards for running an effective organization.

The award process requires the completion of a comprehensive 50-page application divided into seven sections: Leadership, Strategic Planning, Customer Focus, Information & Analysis, Staff Focus, Process Management and Organizational Results. The application requires a detailed description of major process, approach and deployment, and corresponding results. Serious contenders for the award must demonstrate sustained improvements in measurable results over a four to five year period, as well as performance that compares favorably to the best VA and private sector health care providers.

The 2008 Kizer Award was presented by William F. Feeley, VHA Deputy Undersecretary for Health for Operations and Management, to Stephen L. Lemons, Network Directors for VA Healthcare Network Upstate New York, at the VHA National Leadership Board meeting held in Washington D.C. September 16, 2008. The Kizer award includes a crystal trophy and \$500,000 earmarked to fund initiatives that will improve quality of care.

One of the most compelling aspects of VA Healthcare Network Upstate New York's Kizer application was the ability of the Network to significantly surpass private sector performance for a wide array of patient satisfaction, cancer screening, heart disease and diabetes management and behavioral health measures. This award is a tribute to more than 6,000 employees who provide quality of care for veteran patients.

VA Healthcare Network Upstate New York was the recipient of this award in 1999, 2001 and 2003.